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The Gull

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Rare Bird Alert
page 43

Calendar
page 43

Field Trips
page 44

Back Yard Birder
page 45

Observations
page 46

News from the
Ranch
page 47

Bruce Walker
back page

We are still receiving reports of untimely deliveries of *The Gull* and would like to reiterate that the most effective party to complain to is your local post office. Enough people from widely scattered locations are receiving their newsletter on time to make it evident that it's getting into the postal system all right but is being held up at various locations. There is no use in trying to fix specific blame but the squeaky wheel does get attention.

During the months of May and June, this El Dorado County area north of Hwy. 50 between Placerville and Lake Tahoe is one of the best montane birding areas in northern California lying within easy driving distance of the Bay Area. Located on the western slope of the Sierra Nevada, approximately 60 miles east of Sacramento, the area provides an excellent opportunity to view a large variety of breeding birds. A day's visit in late Spring can easily produce a list of over 60 species. Specialty birds include Mountain Quail, Calliope Hummingbird, Red-breasted Sapsucker, White-headed Woodpecker, Hammond's Flycatcher, Dusky Flycatcher, Olive-sided Flycatcher, Pygmy Nuthatch, Townsend's Solitaire, Hermit Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Cassin's Finch, Green-tailed Towhee, and Fox Sparrow. Varying in elevation from approximately 3500 feet to over 6000 feet, the area offers a number of different habitats for breeding birds. Over 30 miles of paved roadway provide access to a number of prime locations that can be thoroughly covered during a day of birding.

Direction of Travel: Riverton, the starting point, is about an hour and ten minute drive from Sacramento. To reach the Riverton area, head east from Sacramento on U. S. Highway 50, continuing about 20 miles past Placerville, until reaching the point where Highway 50 crosses the bridge over the South Fork of the American River. Just 200 feet past the bridge, both a sign and a left-turn lane direct traffic to the Crystal Basin Area. Be careful in making your left turn, however, as speeding west-bound traffic rounding the curve ahead can pose a hazard. As you begin driving up the hill, you begin a 30-mile route on paved road that passes

through a variety of habitats containing chaparral, black oak, ponderosa pine, incense cedar, aspen, and fir. The road takes a northerly course paralleling the Crystal Range and climbs to Loon Lake, elevation 6400 feet.

Special Bulletin: Those who knew this area in prior years will now find a significant change has occurred. On September 29, 1992 the huge Cleveland Corral Fire erupted and spread rapidly through this area which had been honed to tinder dry conditions by a severe six-year drought. When finally brought under control by an army of fire fighters on October 14, the fire had ravaged 25,000 acres. Furthermore, it burned as an exceptionally hot fire which devoured nearly everything in its path. Fully seven miles of the route described here were severely burned by the fire. The blaze recognized no barriers as it raced through the area. The road constituted no obstacle to the fire which easily jumped the gap and roared onward. A blackened landscape replaced groves of mature black oaks, hillsides of chaparral, stands of stately ponderosa pines, cool stretches of incense cedar, and vast plantations of timberland. As the area begins its gradual transition to its former look, the changes that time brings will be interesting to observe. Although many of the former vistas and favorite birding spots of earlier years have been changed, there is good reason to expect the new emerging landscape and plant communities will create a dynamic and interesting scene to observe. Echoing the changing succession of shrubs and trees, the changing distribution of birds will be most interesting to monitor. Explore, observe, and note how this landscape changes as it heals from the big fire.

When to Visit the Area: The optimum time to bird this area is from the middle of May to late June. Since 1975, over 80 species of breeding birds have been recorded during the annual breeding bird surveys conducted for the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Earlier visits in May during migration can produce Rufous Hummingbirds and Townsend's Warblers, species that do not breed here but which pass through in good numbers. By July many birds have stopped singing and are much more difficult to find.

A good place to relax after your drive and to assemble your birding gear is a stop located one-half mile up the Crystal Basin Road. Located on the left side of the road, this large cleared area is what remains from a former log scaling station. This location was not affected by the big 1992 fire since it lies just to the west of the principal fire area. Although the location is compromised somewhat by the din of traffic below on Highway 50, it is still a good place to hear or see many birds including Black-throated Gray Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Black-headed Grosbeak, and Rufous-sided Towhee. Meanwhile, far up the hill listen for the distant "kwook!" of a Mountain Quail.

From the log scaling station, the road gains elevation most of the way. As you continue up the road, keep in mind the changing types of habitat as the road climbs in elevation and look for the corresponding different communities of birds. Black-throated Gray Warblers and Purple Finches will ultimately give way to Yellow-rumped Warblers and Cassin's Finches. The continuous seven mile stretch ravaged by the big 1992 fire begins after the first mile of travel and offers a real contrast to the rest of the route. Here is a splendid opportunity to monitor the successive stages of recovery over the ensuing years. Initially pioneering shrubs and chaparral will attract birds like Wrentits, Yellow Warblers, Lazuli Buntings, and Rufous-sided Towhees, and, with time when black oaks and conifers return, Solitary Vireos, Nashville Warblers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, and Golden-crowned Kinglets will reign.

The road has light to moderate traffic to watch for, but there are many safe pullouts for birding. When you see a unique looking habitat and a safe pullout, stop and see if you can anticipate the birds you will encounter. Doing this, you will learn much about the birds of the area in addition to generating a good day's list of birds.

Much of the land along the road is public lands, but a substantial number of large parcels are owned by Michigan-California Lumber Company. Some of this land is posted, so please respect private property rights. Be advised that logging operations may be under way in some areas and consequently your safety becomes an issue; likewise logging trucks roaring down narrow dirt roads compel one to stay clear of such areas.

Several inviting pullouts for birding occur during the start of your drive up the Crystal Basin Road. Until the Cleveland Corral Fire, perhaps the best stop was the U. S. Forest Service Information Area located about three miles up the road. The facility is being reconstructed along with a parking area. A posted map outlines the Crystal Basin region and is useful in orienting one's self to the area. Also, a number of available campgrounds are listed. Formerly one could spend at least an hour in this area as the birding was very productive, producing

such species as Red-breasted Sapsucker, Western Wood-peewee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Solitary Vireo, Warbling Vireo, Black-throated Gray Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Western Tanager, Black-headed Grosbeak, Purple Finch, and Northern Oriole. Now, however, the huge black oaks that used to grace the area are gone. Which of the former species do you now find and what new species are pioneering the area? Walking back down the main road about 200 yards brings you to a side road paralleling the highway. The south facing hillside behind this side road formerly contained a mixture of chaparral, black oaks, and ponderosa pines. This area completely burned, but will again return to an area of chaparral mix that will attract an interesting assortment of birds. Wrentit, Bushtit, Yellow Warbler, and Fox Sparrow should be found. Lazuli Buntings formerly favored this area when it was chaparral and should be expected to return now that the fire has reshaped the habitat again.

Continuing back up the main road one-half mile past the Forest Service Rest Area brings you to a broad curve where parking is available on the left side. Running parallel with the road up to the beginning of this curve was formerly a bushy hillside that was quite good for both Calliope Hummingbird and Lazuli Bunting. As the area restores itself, it should be good again for these same species. Also check the area to the right of the logging road that comes down the hillside and meets the road on the outside of this curve. Nashville Warblers were regular here and MacGillivray's Warblers were found in a bushy draw made productive by the water that flowed through it. As the area recovers, note the abundance of Fox Sparrows. Get to know their song well as it closely resembles the song of Green-tailed Towhees. The two species have call notes that are quite distinctive, however. This gray-headed race of Fox Sparrow gives a metallic chip note quite similar to that of a California Towhee whereas the Green-tailed Towhee gives a soft kitten-like mew note.

The next five miles were extensively burned. Formerly this stretch of road had a number of productive pullouts that provided excellent roadside birding. Just how productive some of these locations will be in the future remains to be seen. Mountain Quail, however, should quickly return to this area in large numbers. Although the quail are much easier to hear than to see, your best chance of encountering one of these handsome birds is to cruise the road early in the morning. During the breeding bird survey, the quail are usually heard at over one-half of the fifty scheduled stops along the survey route. Before the big fire, they were sometimes found foraging around the perimeter of a large open area for stockpiling logs. This location is three miles up the road from the Forest Service Information Area and is on the left side of the road and is visible only as you gain the crest of a hill. Since the fire, the site has been extensively used for storing burned logs salvaged from the fire, but it will revert to an open field again once the salvage operation is completed.

Soon after leaving this log storage area, the road comes to a sign marking Peavine Ridge Road which lies ahead. You should continue on the main road another tenth of a mile as it takes a big curve to the right. While looking for traffic, carefully cut

across the road to park on the outside of the curve where you will find ample room to stop. (The road here is wide enough to afford safe visibility for this maneuver, but **be alert for oncoming traffic!**) The stop here overlooks a big ravine giving you a wide view. This area was also leveled by the big fire, but as the area recovers, look for the return of Dusky Flycatchers, MacGillivray's Warblers, and Green-tailed Towhees. Formerly Lewis Woodpeckers nested in this location, but they have been absent now for nearly two decades. Will any tall standing snags from the fire attract them here again? Do carefully check the few surviving tall standing snags near this location. Such dead trees are a vital component of the forest in providing homes to many cavity nesting birds. At this location American Kestrel, Northern Flicker, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Pygmy Nuthatch, Tree Swallow, and Violet-green Swallow have nested in the past. The open terrain at this stop gives a full view of the sky where you might see soaring hawks or Band-tailed Pigeons winging by.

Continuing 1/4 mile up the road and rounding a curve will bring you to a side road on the right leading to Granite Springs. Sometimes driving a few miles of this lightly traveled road will produce Mountain Quail.

Back on the Crystal Basin Road and continuing towards Ice House, the next couple of miles takes you through yet more of the burned area. This particular corridor is of interest since it was also burned in 1959 by another huge fire known as the Ice House Fire. As the area was recovering from that fire, this portion of the route was particularly good for Dusky Flycatcher, Yellow Warbler, MacGillivray's Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and Green-tailed Towhee. Just as some of the conifers were getting back to heights of 20 feet or more and changing the character of the area, the Cleveland Corral Fire hit and now the process must start all over again.

Finally, about 8.5 miles into the route from its start back at Highway 50, the road clears the burn and once again we see conifers and, rounding a bend in the road, the first aspens of the drive. Another mile and you are at the Ice House Store. Food, drinks, and gasoline are available in addition to restrooms.

Ed Harper

Part II will appear next month. If you can't wait, copies of the article in its entirety may be obtained from the GGAS office for \$2.00 which covers the cost of copying and mailing.

BIRD ALERT: A RARE OPPORTUNITY

For twenty years now, Joe Morlan has been supplying rare bird junkies their daily dose of bird sightings on the Northern California Rare Bird Alert. As anyone who has attempted to use birding hotlines in other parts of the country will tell you, we are blessed with up-to-date, clear, concise reports with accurate and easy-to-follow directions. There is no way to measure how many calls the bird alert gets, but during migration the number is estimated to be upwards of 500 per week. Over the years the bird alert has changed and grown: the weekly report was first supplemented and then superseded by the daily update; the computer age meant the ability to maintain and analyze data on a more constant and sophisticated level than ever before; and the information superhighway allowed distribution of reports to an ever-wider audience at a convenience scarcely imagined in 1974.

However, twenty years is twenty years and Joe is ready to pass the diadem and sceptre. As presently defined, the scope of the job goes far beyond monitoring reports and creating a taped daily and/or weekly update, as if that were not enough. The phoned-in sightings are incorporated into a comprehensive database that provides the raw information for the monthly

"Observations" in *The Gull*. Pertinent information is extracted and sent quarterly to the regional editors of *American Birds*. Updates are circulated to a computer bulletin board and are fax-modemmed to interested subscribers. In short, Joe's talents and capabilities have made it necessary to advertise for a wizard: a keen birder qualified to evaluate incoming reports who possesses computer skills adequate to maintain existing databases.

We're not sure that such a person exists and are prepared to think in terms of two people. With Joe's help we have developed some alternative strategies that would require substantially less investiture of time for continuing the existing services, but we would like to invite proposals from individuals interested in taking over the Northern California Rare Bird Alert. Golden Gate Audubon owns two heavy-duty answering machines which have proved to be exceptionally reliable over the years although they lack some of the amenities of newer machines. GGAS also covers the cost of the two phone lines that are presently used so that there is no out-of-pocket expense to the person performing this service. Please submit ideas and proposals to: GGAS, 2530 San Pablo Ave, Suite G, Berkeley, CA 94702.

Calendar

June 6: S. F. Conservation Committee. 7:30 p.m. Call office for location.

June 13: East Bay Conservation Committee. 7:30 p.m. GGAS office.

June 20: Education Committee. 7:00 p.m. GGAS office. The Education Committee is being revived after a long hiatus. If you have a

passion for birds and the natural world, use it to inspire in others a sense of the wonder and excitement of birds and a desire to protect our environment. From slide shows to brochures and fact sheets to study boxes, there's a plethora of possibilities. Bring your ideas and enthusiasm. Call Debey Zito for additional information: (415) 648-6861.

June 27: Board of Directors, 7:30 p.m., GGAS office.

Field Trips Calendar

Friday-Sunday, June 3-5

Birding by Ear in Yosemite. Leader: Dave Cornman (510) 825-2106

Wednesday, June 8

Mini-trip to Redwood Regional Park. Leaders: Anna Wilcox (510) 351-9301, and Jean-Marie Spoelman

For details on the above trips, see *The Gull* for May.

Saturday-Sunday, June 11-12

Yuba Pass and vicinity

On Saturday meet at 8:30 a.m. at the Yuba Pass Summit parking area (Hwy. 49) 15 miles east of Sierra City. Take 1-80 to Truckee, go north on Hwy. 89 to Sierraville and take Hwy. 49 west to Yuba Summit. (Or take Hwy. 49 northeast from Auburn for a slower but more scenic route.) We will bird the mountain areas for summer residents including dippers, flycatchers, warblers and Calliope Hummingbirds.

On Sunday meet at 8 a.m. at the intersection of Hwys. 49 and 89 (by the saw mill) about 1 mile north of Sattley. We will caravan to Sierra Valley and look for many of the birds of the eastern Sierra including White-faced Ibis, Sandhill Cranes, Sage Thrashers and Yellow-headed Blackbirds.

See *The Gull* for May for details on motels and campgrounds. Leader: Peter Allen (415) 892-8063. (*)

Friday-Sunday, June 24-26

Lassen Volcanic National Park

(Note: leader Dan Murphy, on jury duty for six months, may still be on jury duty which would cause cancellation of this traditional trip. Members interested in the trip should call the GGAS office at (510) 843-2222. You will be notified by the office no later than Tues., June 21st, whether or not the trip is on.)

Join the Murphy family on the annual GGAS family camping excursion to Lassen. In past years we have seen Willow, Hammond's and Dusky Flycatchers, Black Swift, Bald Eagle, Osprey, Townsend's Solitaire, Mountain Bluebird, Calliope Hummingbird, Black-backed Woodpecker, Williamson's Sapsucker and most of the warblers and finches that breed in the mountains.

The more serious birders will meet at the Manzanita Lake Campgrounds store at 6:30 a.m. on Friday and again on Sunday. We will bird around the lake for 2-3 hours, return to camp for a quick breakfast, then rendezvous again at the store at 10:30 a.m. for another outing. The Friday outing will be a leisurely hike of about 3 miles on one of Lassen's beautiful trails. (We may climb as much as 700 ft.) Wear sturdy shoes and bring lunch and liquids. Suntan lotion, a hat, mosquito repellent and warm clothing may also be necessary.

Saturday is a special day for everyone. We will meet by the camp store at 7:30 a.m. and caravan north to Burney Falls, Fall

River Valley and Baum Lake. Bring lunch and liquids. This all-day excursion of about 100 miles will include a 2 or 3-hour swim at Lake Britton while watching for Bald Eagles. (If you forget your swimsuit, the trails at Burney Park offer a wonderful diversion, and fishermen can try their luck in some of northern California's finest trout streams.)

Since this is a long and tiring day, we suggest a get-together for dinner at a nearby restaurant instead of returning to the campstove. Stop by our campsite for further information. We will have a campfire every evening beginning at 8 p.m. Bring your own chair (and cup of wine, if you choose). We will provide hot water for tea or coffee. Check the campground bulletin boards or the office at Hat Creek Resort for our poster, campsite number and any last-minute changes in the schedule.

For the Sunday outing we will meet at 10:30 a.m. to drive through the park, making frequent stops for birding. We should reach the south entrance around 1 p.m., depending upon how long we play in the snow at the summit. For this final event, bring warm gloves, a plastic trash bag for a mini-toboggan, and a camera.

From the Bay Area drive north on I-5 to the junction with Hwy. 44 in Redding. Go east on Hwy. 44 to the northwest entrance of Lassen. Camping facilities are available at Manzanita Lake. Lodging is available about 15 miles north of the park at Hat Creek Resort, Old Station (916) 335-7121. Other information can be obtained from the park headquarters, Mineral, CA 96063. Leaders: Dan and Joan Murphy (415) 564-0074. \$ (*) Be sure to call GGAS Office for trip confirmation.

Thursday-Sunday, July 7-10

Backpacking trip to Lassen Volcanic National Park

We will backpack in three miles to Snag Lake and spend three nights in primitive camping by a stream near a large meadow. We should see a flock of mixed warblers and other songbirds that summer in Lassen, plus resident birds of the mountains, Bald Eagles, and perhaps some migrating shorebirds. We will be above 6,000 ft. elev. in beautiful country!

To minimize impact on fragile habitat, this trip is limited to twelve people. Everyone will be responsible for his/her own gear and food, although some cooperative or shared meals may be arranged. Leaders: David Rice (510) 527-7210 and Robin Pulich. \$ (*)

Saturday-Sunday, July 30-31

Yosemite Alpine Ecology

Our annual trip to the High Sierra will again be the last weekend of July, when the wildflowers should be near their peak - and hopefully the mosquitoes are well past their peak. As usual, Saturday will be a full day of hiking and climbing and on Sunday we will be back to our cars by 3 p.m. for those returning to the Bay Area.

Back Yard Birder

Meg Pauletich

As the Horned Grebe popped to the surface from its dive for fish, I had a clear view of its intense red eye. I wondered about birds' eye color. Does it have any significance? Since birds have no whites of their eyes showing, the eye color is that of the iris. Most birds have dark brown or black eyes, but a significant number have eye color. Young crows have light-colored eyes which become dark brown upon maturity. Among others, it is the males which have the brighter-colored eyes. Since they become even more intense in color during breeding season, it is assumed they play a part in display.

Humans and birds both rely heavily upon vision as a sense. Except for a few bird species, men and birds have relatively equal eyesight abilities. However, birds can see "faster," i.e., they can pick up details and can detect movement more quickly than man can. Among bird species there is a huge range of visual abilities depending on how their eyes have evolved according to necessity. They require keen eyesight to find food, to avoid predators, to orient themselves during long flights, to assist in flying among trees and to aid in landing. A bird can exist with one eye but a blind bird is doomed in the wild.

Among birds the eyes take up a huge amount of space in the skull - not surprisingly, much more space than the brain! Since their eyes are fixed in their sockets, they cannot rotate them as we do while keeping our heads stationary. They must move the entire head and neck to gaze in different directions. An owl, in order to compensate, can rotate its head 270 degrees. Obviously it cannot swivel its head completely around, but when it reaches its limit, it can move it back to the other side so quickly it is scarcely noticeable, giving the impression that it can rotate its head 360 degrees. Pigeons have eyes on the sides of their heads and can see everywhere except directly behind (340 degrees). The American Woodcock spends its waking hours poking into mud and dirt for food, so its eyes are placed toward the top of its head so that it can see nearly 360 degrees, including above and behind its head. The American Bittern remains frozen in a cryptic posture for long periods of time, mimicking the reeds it

Field Trips (cont.)

Because of the substantial popularity of the trip in recent years it will be **by reservation only** and the number of participants will be strictly limited. Please call George Peyton as soon as possible if you are interested.

The emphasis for the weekend will be "general alpine ecology", not just birds. We will be hiking and climbing at elevations of 9,000 to 11,000 feet, so all participants should be in good physical condition, with reasonable experience in hiking at those elevations. Each day you should bring lunch, liquids, hat, water repellent jacket, sun lotion, mosquito repellent and good walking shoes (or boots) with treaded soles - no smooth-soled tennis shoes!

Public campgrounds are located between Tioga Pass and Lee

stands amid. With its bill pointed skyward, it has eyes angled downward so it doesn't miss a chance to snag some food as it drifts by. In addition, all birds have monocular vision, the ability to use each eye independently, as well as binocular vision when they are looking straight ahead. Now you can appreciate the importance of vision to a bird's life!

Hawk species have visual acuity far superior to other birds. They can pick out small objects 2 to 3 times better than we can, which makes sense when you consider the type of hunting they do from high above their prey. Owls have great vision coupled with exceptional light-gathering capabilities enabling them to see in the dark which supplements their acute hearing when finding prey at night. They are definitely NOT blind during daylight but simply are inactive then. Even though their night vision is greater than a human's, our eyes can adjust to darkness in about 10 minutes while owls' night vision "turns on" after an hour or more. Some diving birds have special vision for finding prey in murky water. Terns, which dive for fish from above, cannot see underwater and must take careful aim or risk a missed meal. Penguins, on the other hand, see well ONLY in water, where they need excellent vision to catch fast-swimming fish.

Do birds see color? Surely they must or else all those exotic colored feathers would be wasted. It is assumed that birds which are active during the day can see color while nocturnal birds have no need for color vision and probably don't have it.

The nictitating membrane lies under the main eyelids of all birds. It is generally transparent and is used for moistening the eye the same way we use our outer eyelid. Birds seldom close their eyes (always wary) except to sleep so they need to keep their eyes moist while their eyes are open. It is theorized that in birds of prey, the nictitating membrane may act as a windshield, protecting the swift-flying birds' eyes. Frogs, all reptiles and some mammals also have this membrane.

The next time you "eyeball" a bird, it just might be taking its measure of you!

Vining off Hwy. 120 (4 to 6 miles west of Hwy. 395), as well as Tuolumne Meadows Campground in Yosemite. Motels in Lee Vining include Best Western Lakeview Lodge (619) 647-6543, Gateway Motel (619) 647-6467, and Murphey's Motel (619) 647-6316. For trip reservation and meeting details, call Leader: George Peyton (510) 444-3131 weekdays. \$ (*)

Trips marked with \$ go to parks and other sites that require an entrance fee.]

Carpooling arrangements will be attempted for trips marked (*).

Problems: if you need a ride or can take a passenger, or if you need information and have difficulty reaching a field trip leader, call Russ Wilson, Field Trips CommitteeChair (510) 524-2399.

Observations

Daniel Singer

With the recent publication of the 39th Supplement to the Sixth AOU Checklist several changes are now officially adopted. Of particular significance to birders in California are several name changes and species splits. These include the splitting of Lesser Golden-Plover into American Golden-Plover and Pacific Golden-Plover. Pacific Golden-Plover winters in very small numbers locally along our coast. Both species occur as uncommon to rare migrants in fall and spring. Identification of these forms is often difficult and birders are encouraged to exercise caution when attempting to identify any golden-plover. Green-backed Heron is now Green Heron; Black-shouldered Kite is now White-tailed Kite. Rosy Finch is re-split into 3 species: Gray-crowned Rosy Finch, Brown-capped Rosy Finch and Black Rosy Finch. Gray-crowned Rosy Finch breeds at high elevations in the Sierra Nevada, the White Mountains and Mt. Shasta. Brown-capped Rosy Finch is found in the Rocky Mountain region. Black Rosy Finch, a bird of the Great Basin ranges, appears to be extremely rare in our state and any claims should be thoroughly documented. This form may deserve a place on the California Bird Records Committee Review List.

Up to 1400 Pacific Loons at Point Reyes, MRN, on 4/23-24 (RS) is impressive and indicative of this species' abundance along the coast during its migration. The two Red-necked Grebes wintering at Lake Merced, SF, were still present through 4/27 and looking good in their breeding finery (m.ob.). Sea watches from Pigeon Point, SM, produced one Black-footed Albatross on 4/26 (BS fide RSTh), between three and six Pink-footed Shearwaters on 5/1 (RSTh), 2100 Sooty Shearwaters on 4/10 (RSTh) and three or four Short-tailed Shearwaters on 4/10-11 (RSTh, KB).

A Least Bittern, present in Martinez, CC, from 4/9 to 4/12 (BbE, RJR), is

noteworthy. Great Blue Heron is nesting for the second year in a row in Golden Gate Park with 3 chicks observed in the nest on 5/3 (RD). Coastal wintering Cattle Egrets lingering into spring include one still at Inverness Park, MRN, on 4/12 (FGB) and up to nine at Moon Glow Dairy, MTY, on 4/30 (fide DSg). The only report of White-faced Ibis in April away from the Central Valley was a single bird at Moon Glow Dairy on 4/30 (fide DSg). This individual had been present for some time. The Ross' Goose at the Sunnyvale Sewer Ponds, SCL, continued through 4/10 (m.ob.) and one at Pt. Reyes remained until at least 4/24 (m.ob.). Eleven Blue-winged Teal were along Santa Fe Grade, MER, on 4/10 (DSg, ASH) but only two remained on 4/16 (JM, ASH). Single male Harlequin Ducks were present at Pt. Reyes through 4/28 (DHo) and in Monterey through at least 4/30 (m.ob.). Oldsquaws continued at Point Reyes with three at Drake's Beach on 4/9 (LLu) and two at Limantour on 4/21 (DWm). Two Oldsquaws were also seen at Pigeon Pt. on 4/17 as were six Black Scoters on 4/10 (RSTh).

An American Golden-Plover, seldom seen in spring, along with five Pacific Golden-Plovers were reported from PRNS on 4/28 (DHo). Five Pacific Golden-Plovers were at Lawson's Landing, MRN, on 4/26 (RS). Five Solitary Sandpipers were reported between 4/15 and 4/29 (m.ob.); three of these were inland and two were coastal. A Baird's Sandpiper, very rare this time of year, was at Andrew Molera State Park, MTY, on 4/10 (BBrr). Better yet were four Pectoral Sandpipers spanning 4/10-30 from SM (RSTh), MRN (LLu), MER (BS fide RSTh) and MTY (DSg). Exceptional is the only way to describe a Stilt Sandpiper reported from along Santa Fe Grade on 4/26 (BS fide RSTh). This may be only the third spring record of this species in Northern California. This species has wintered in recent years in MER so perhaps there's a

connection. Regardless, thorough documentation of seasonal rarities should be sent to regional or subregional editors of *American Birds*. A female Ruff, presumably the same bird which wintered at this site, was at the Castroville Sewer Ponds, MTY, on 4/30 (RCa, DSg, RFT). An adult Laughing Gull flew by the Salinas River mouth, MTY, on 4/28 (DWm, SFB) and an adult Franklin's Gull flew past Pigeon Pt. on 5/1 (RSTh, DPo). An adult **Little Gull** was observed at Hayward Landing, ALA, on 4/18 (RJR). There are only 24 accepted records of this species in Northern California. Three additional observations of Glaucous Gull were reported: 4/23-24 at PRNS (RS); 4/24 at Inverness, MRN (DDeS) and 5/1 at Ano Nuevo, SM (GJS). Single Common Terns were seen at two sites along the San Mateo Coast on 5/1 (RSTh).

Up to nineteen Black-chinned Hummingbirds were reported during the three-day span of 4/29-5/1. Save one from Contra Costa (SGI) all were from various spots in San Jose, SCL (MJM, SCR). Two Costa's Hummingbirds were seen along Del Puerto Canyon Road, STA, between 4/12 and 5/2 (GFi, DSg, JMS) and three Calliope Hummingbirds were observed on Mt. Diablo, CC, between 4/19 and 4/30 (GFi, JIB, MJC, HH).

The season's first report of Willow Flycatcher was on 4/30 from Bethel Island, CC (SGI). For the fourth consecutive spring Hammond's Flycatchers were found in large numbers, as evidenced by an impressive thirty-eight between 4/6 and 5/1 (m.ob.). The vast majority of these were reported from the interior as is expected. Two Dusky Flycatchers were reported from Mt. Diablo on 4/19 and 4/28 (both GFi). San Francisco's wintering Tropical Kingbird was last reported on 4/16 (m.ob.).

As of 5/1, the first and only record of Canyon Wren for SM was still present

News from the Ranch

Dan Murphy

Public Season Ending

Time does fly and yet another public season is drawing to a close. As of this writing the 1994 season has been one of our most successful ever in terms of public interest in the Ranch. Between publicity in local papers and general interest in ACR, our weekends have been pretty busy, but no so busy we're overrun. The Ranch will close for the season on July 17, so be sure to go out and see the heron and egret chicks.

Great Blue Herons, Great Egrets and Snowy Egrets are all on nests and birds should start fledging toward the end of June. In fact, if you put your visit off until July you're more likely to see some of the birds fledge. That first flight is quite a sight. The fledglings are adult-size so they appear to be giants careening from one tree to the next, unable to grasp a branch and always so very close to a fatal fall. They almost always make it though, so for us it is a bit of a comedy of errors. I guess for them it's like learning to skate -- GET OUT OF THE WAY 'CAUSE HERE I COME AND I CAN'T STOP!!

Tomales Bay Volunteer Opportunity

It seems early, but if you're a birder you're probably thinking about fall migration even before you're off on a summer vaca-

tion. If that's the case, you may as well plan ahead now. As usual, John Kelly will be looking for a few experienced birders to help with our Tomales Bay shorebird counts in August and September. Dates aren't set yet, but if you call John at (415) 663-8203 you can get the information you need.

Docent Training

The 1994 Docent Training Class begins in September. The twenty-two Wednesday classes will be designed to provide you with the information and confidence to lead groups of 4th and 5th graders on nature walks at the Ranch and to provide instruction in the classroom. An orientation session is scheduled for August 31. If you are interested in learning more about docent training, please call us at (415) 868-9244. There is a \$90 fee for this program.

Spring Seminars

AMAZING COASTAL MARSHERS. Saturday, June 18. \$30.
BUTTERFLY COUNTS. Saturday and Sunday, June 25 and 26.
GET-TO-KNOW-THE-CRITTERS NIGHT. Wednesday, June 22. \$8.

Participation by reservation only. Call (415) 868-9244 to register.

Observations (cont.)

near Ano Nuevo where it spent the winter (RSTh, DPo). A Townsend's Solitaire spent over a week at PRNS, 4/24-5/2 (ABtt, JM). Another was in southern MTY from 4/28-30 (SFB, DR, DSg). Present since 11/8/93, a **Brown Thrasher** wintering in West Marin on private property lingered until at least 5/3 (KH).

Nashville Warbler is generally considered an uncommon though regular migrant in the Bay Area; so **twenty-three** at Sunol Regional Park, ALA, on 4/22 (SGl) must have been exciting. Up to eight Palm Warblers were reported between 4/9 and 5/4 (m.ob.). Two or three were winter holdovers from the South Bay and at least one was a singing male at Point Reyes. Reports of an Eastern Palm at PRNS proved to be a brightly-colored western type. A Black-and-White Warbler was in Berkeley, ALA, on 4/28 (MFy) and single Northern Waterthrushes were at Bodega Bay on 4/17-18 (NTC, KB) and San Jose on 4/30 (SCR). The first Yellow-breasted Chat of the season was coastal on 4/11 in SM (BS fide RSTh) but over two weeks elapsed before seven other reports (spanning 4/27 - 5/4) from more typical interior locations came in (m.ob.).

A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was in Glen Park, SF, from 4/18 through 4/23 (DZ, ASH). Up to eight Blue Grosbeaks were seen at widely scattered interior locations between 4/27 and 5/1 (m.ob.). A Clay-colored Sparrow was discovered

in Ukiah, MEN, on 4/29 and two were there on 4/30 (JRW). The **Field Sparrow** in Martinez was seen again on 4/12 after seemingly disappearing for a month (DWi). The last Swamp Sparrow report was on 4/12 from San Jose (SCR). Over fifteen White-throated Sparrows were seen throughout the month, most from areas where birds had wintered (m.ob.). Four Chestnut-collared Longspurs were still near the Sierra Rd. summit in SCL through 4/24 (m.ob.). Santa Cruz County's first **Great-tailed Grackle**, initially reported on 4/14 (BAH, DLSu), had actually been present since 12/17/93. Lawrence's Goldfinch continued to be widely reported, generally in small numbers, throughout the month of April from various interior locations (m.ob.).

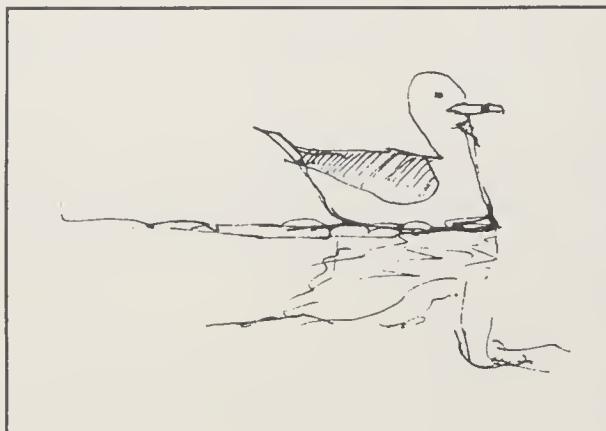
Observers: Stephen F. Bailey, Bruce Barrett, Anthony Battiste, Florence G. Bennett, Jim Booker, Joelle Buffa (JIB), Ken Burton, Rita Carratello, Jack Cole, Nancy T. Conzett, Mary Jane Culver, Gary Deghi, David DeSante, Ruth Doty, Bob Elliot, Carter L. Faust, George Finger, Mary Foley, Frank Gardner, Steve Glover, Helen Green, Keith Hansen, Hugh Harvey, David Hoffman, Alan S. Hopkins, Bambi Hopkins, Cindy Lieurance, Leslie Lieurance, Mac McCormick, Michael J. Mammoser, Bert McKee, Joe Morlan, David Powell, Peter Radcliff, Jean M. Richmond, Robert J. Richmond, Don Roberson, Mike M. Rogers, Mary Louise Rosegay, Steve C. Rottenborn, Barry Saupe, Dianne Sierra (DSi), Dan Singer (DSg), Jean-Marie Spoelman, Rich Stallcup, Daniel Stoebel, Gary J. Strachan, Emilie Strauss, David L. Suddjian, Scott B. Terrill, Ronald S. Thorn, Robert F. Tintle, Jerry R. White, Denise Wight (DWi), David Wimpfheimer (DWm), David G. Yee, Debey Zito.

Data thanks to Joe Morlan and the Northern California Rare Bird Alert

BRUCE WALKER: 1945 - 1994

Impossible as it may seem, Bruce Walker, Golden Gate Audubon's president from 1990 to 1992 and one of our most dynamic and dedicated members, died of complications arising from kidney cancer on April 26. Those of us who knew him with his unfailing good humor and spirit coupled with the love and strength of his wife, Mary Law, thought that if anyone could overcome the odds of this disease, Bruce could. And he did carry on with his characteristic grace, humor and honesty for considerably longer than predicted.

Our chapter was fortunate to have attracted Bruce's talents and attention for a number of years. "Captain" as he was known to many was an artist whose use of bird imagery led him to become an active birder with particular interest in shorebirds and ducks. He was an outspoken champion and preservation at the where he frequently his concerns broad- and habitat protection of San Francisco Bay Eastshore State Park regional director for Parks and Wildlife ini- Though Bruce was a environmental politics, leader and strategist success of CALPAW. several other initiative efforts and eventually joined the staff of Committee for Water Policy Consensus.



of habitat protection Emeryville Crescent birded. The scope of ened to include wildlife all along the east shore as part of Citizens for and, ultimately, as a the Californians for tiative (CALPAW). relative newcomer to his effectiveness as a was apparent with the He continued with

We recruited Bruce for our Board of Directors as soon as we knew he was willing and for president with the same deliberate speed. He was the very proud recipient of our 1990 Conservation Award. The thing about Bruce was his humor and his honesty. Most of us can't remember an exchange, conversation or meeting with Bruce that we didn't enjoy. He wasn't ill-at-ease speaking his mind to one, or many, a welcome trait in an environmental advocate. Bruce made friends wherever he went and in whatever arena he chose to play. His clarity, creativity and earnest, yet lively manner, gained him respect from a wide variety of people and organizations.

We pay tribute to Bruce Walker, friend and leader. Mary Law asks that donations in Bruce's memory be made to Golden Gate Audubon Society.

Golden Gate Audubon Society
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WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

As a member of National Audubon Society, you are automatically enrolled in the local chapter, Golden Gate Audubon Society. Chapter benefits include receipt of *The Gull*, access to field trips and programs, and the opportunity to volunteer. Call the office if you have any questions.

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